



# Status of Watershed Planning Efforts in Washington State

In 1998, the Washington State Legislature passed ESHB 2514, the Watershed Planning Act (RCW 90.82), providing a framework for developing local solutions to water issues on a watershed basis. Framed around watersheds, or sub-watersheds known as Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs), this voluntary, comprehensive planning process is designed to allow local citizens, governments and tribes to form watershed management Planning Units to develop watershed management plans. State agencies manage grants, provide technical assistance and, if requested, serve on the Planning Units.

Ecology's primary repository of information on the Watershed Planning Act, including grant programs and links for each planning effort, is available at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/watershed>

## Watershed Planning Chronology

### 1998

- ❖ **Watershed Planning Act** (RCW 90.82) provides voluntary, comprehensive planning process for citizens, governments and tribes to develop watershed management plans.

### 1999

- ❖ Ecology publishes **Guide to Watershed Management and Planning (Draft)** discussing Watershed Planning Act requirements and offering suggestions for navigating planning process.

- ❖ Ecology joins 11 other agencies in signing **Watershed Planning & Salmon Recovery Memorandum of Understanding** clarifying roles and responsibilities and fostering cooperative relationships.

- ❖ Ecology publishes **Implementing the Watershed Planning Act: Report for 2000** discussing agency financial and technical assistance, issues raised by Planning Units, and progress of watershed planning efforts.

### 2001

- ❖ **Water Resources Management Act** (ESHB 1832) brings significant changes, including Phase Two funding for instream flows, water quality, and water storage assessments, with priority given to instream flows.

- ❖ OFM publishes **Assessment of Watershed Planning: Progress, State Agency Participation, and Instream Flow Setting** evaluating performance of Planning Units and state agency participation and support.

- ❖ Ecology publishes **Guide to Watershed Management and Planning: Addendum #1** focusing on recent developments in watershed planning, coordination with other planning activities, and strategies for managing water quantity.

- ❖ **Watershed Health Monitoring & Assessment Act** (SSB 5637) committee explores comprehensive monitoring program focusing on salmon recovery, and recommends flow studies for all water critical watersheds and expansion of continuous flow monitoring.

### 2002

- ❖ **Supplemental budget** reduces grant support for biennium from \$11.1 million to \$8.2 million. Ecology shifts to providing grants on cost-reimbursement basis, slowing rate of disbursement to local jurisdictions.

## Watershed Planning Process

### Phase One (Organization)

- ❖ Counties, largest city, and largest water utility (Initiating Governments) gather and appoint a lead agency.

- ❖ Lead agency applies for organizing grant of up to \$50,000 per WRIA, or \$75,000 for a multiple WRIA area.

- ❖ Initiating Governments identify and appoint Planning Unit members representing diverse water resource interests.

- ❖ Planning Unit develops operating and decision-making structures and goals, and scope of work for Phase Two.

### Phase Two (Technical Assessment)

- ❖ Lead agency applies for up to \$200,000 per WRIA to fund technical assessments of the collection, management and distribution of data.

- ❖ Planning Units may also develop strategies for improving water quality, protecting or enhancing fish habitat and setting instream flow recommendations.

- ❖ Lead agency applies for up to \$100,000 per WRIA for each supplemental element: water quality, instream flow recommendations, and water storage assessments. Priority given to instream flow work.

### Phase Three (Plan Development & Approval)

- ❖ Lead agency applies for up to \$250,000 per WRIA to develop a Watershed Management Plan, which must include water supply strategies to meet minimum flows for fish and provide for future out-of-stream uses.

- ❖ Watershed plans submitted for approval by the counties within four years of Phase Two funding.

## Watershed Planning Status

- ❖ At present, 42 of Washington's 62 WRIAs are represented by 33 Planning Units engaged in watershed planning. Planning has been proposed for two additional WRIAs – Snohomish and Okanogan – but Initiating Governments have yet to formally adopt the process.

❖ Three of the Planning Units – Rock/Glade, Palouse and Middle Snake – began Phase One during FY02. Due dates for their final management plans have yet to be determined.

❖ Of the other 30 Planning Units, 20 have submitted Phase Two Level One assessments.

❖ One management plan has been completed and approved by the Planning Unit (Yakima). Twenty-three other Planning Units have Phase Three management plans in various stages of development. Ten final plans are due in 2003, 9 plans are due in 2004, 8 more plans are due in 2005, and 3 plans are scheduled for completion in 2006.

## Ecology Planning Grants

❖ Between July 1998 and December 2002, Ecology awarded 62 grants totaling more than \$18 million to support 33 watershed Planning Units. Included were 26 supplemental grants to support water quality, water storage and instream flow-setting assessments funded by the 2001 Legislature. An additional 15 supplemental requests have been proposed and are under discussion.

❖ The current biennial budget allocates \$8.2 million for grants, including \$1.2 million targeted for supplemental assessments. Some \$200,000 of the grants budget was dedicated to facilitation support for the Central Puget Sound Water Initiative process. Ecology is authorized to retain up to 1% of awards for grants administration, amounting to \$140,000 between July 1998 and June 2003.

## Technical Assistance

❖ **Technical assistance to planning process (\$2,916,000).**

Twenty FTEs at Ecology provide direct support to Planning Units, program coordination, policy considerations, and scientific analysis of instream flows and hydrology.

❖ **Provide for interagency coordination and technical assistance (\$524,000).**

Ecology funded three FTEs from WDFW and one FTE from DOH for technical assistance and support for plan development.

## Water Management Projects

❖ **Expand stream-flow monitoring in watersheds with critical flows (\$1,613,000).**

Data collection was funded in the Elwha/Dungeness, Quilcene/Snow, Nooksack and Walla Walla watersheds. Federal funds were secured for data collection in the Wenatchee, Okanogan and Entiat watersheds. Gauges provide real-time data transmission on-line.

❖ **Set instream flows in six watersheds (\$600,000).**

Additional staff assist with flow work in the Middle Snake, Walla Walla, Stillaguamish and Central Puget Sound watersheds (Cedar/Sammamish, Duwamish/Green and Puyallup/White). Ecology is assessing existing studies and interests of local governments before deciding whether to proceed with flow-setting.

❖ **Develop a state environmental policy act template to streamline environmental review (\$374,000).**

A generic watershed planning SEPA document will address water quantity, instream flow, water quality and habitat, and possible management strategies, and analyze probable significant impacts. Template will help Planning Units make informed decisions and significantly reduce work needed to meet SEPA requirements. Draft EIS will be circulated in mid-February 2003. Final EIS should be available in May 2003.

❖ **Assist the Coordinated Resource Management model for watershed planning (\$200,000).**

Funding was provided to WSU Cooperative Extension to hire a coordinator for the Coordinated Resource Management Task Group. Coordinator will assist voluntary, consensus-based local groups with collaborative problem-solving processes.

❖ **Establish a "blue-ribbon panel" to examine long-term watershed plan implementation needs (\$100,000).**

Phase Four Watershed Plan Implementation Committee inventoried likely plan implementation needs and funding options, explored approaches to implementation coordination, and discussed authority and responsibility for implementing and updating plans.

## Capital Expenditures

❖ **Acquire water rights in watersheds with critical flows (\$8 million).**

Voluntary program to increase flows in critical flow watersheds by selling, leasing or donating rights at fair market value, and returning water to streams and rivers of origin.

❖ **Water measuring grants in critical flow watersheds (\$3.4 million).**

Water users purchase water measuring devices in response to new measuring and reporting requirements, with priority given to applicants in critical flow watersheds.

## Instream Flows

Instream flows are set by administrative rule to ensure adequate water for fish and other instream values. Under ESHB 1832, recommended changes in flow regulations are to be developed by watershed Planning Units prior to adoption by Ecology. Initiating Governments had until the end of 2001, or within one year of initiating Phase One planning, to decide whether to establish or amend flows, or pass the responsibility to Ecology.

❖ As of December 2002, Initiating Governments in 29 WRIAs had indicated their intent to coordinate setting of instream flows. Planning Units for 15 of these WRIAs have received the \$100,000 in grant funds available to prepare flow recommendations. Funding applications are anticipated from most, if not all, of the remaining coordination efforts.

❖ Eight WRIAs – Island, Chambers/Clover, Wind/White Salmon, Klickitat, Rock/Glade, Methow, Colville and Pend Oreille – have chosen not to coordinate flow-setting, thereby passing responsibility to Ecology.

❖ Flows in three WRIAs – Lower Yakima, Naches and Upper Yakima – are regulated by federal "target flows."

❖ Two Planning Units working under Phase One – Palouse and Middle Snake – have until June 2003 and August 2003, respectively, to make this determination.

If the Planning Unit is unable to obtain unanimity, or if approval is not achieved within four years of Phase Two funding, Ecology may undertake the adoption of flow-setting rules. The agency would have two additional years to complete the work.



*A Guide to Instream Flow Setting in Washington State* discusses statutory requirements, how to assess flow needs and develop recommendations, and the rule-making process. A starting point for groups entering flow discussions, the recently published document complements the SEPA environmental review template being prepared.

## Plan Implementation

The Phase Four Watershed Plan Implementation Committee's final report found that considerable progress in planning has been made since passage of the Watershed Planning Act. Among their key recommendations to Planning Units and the Legislature:

### Recommendations to Planning Units

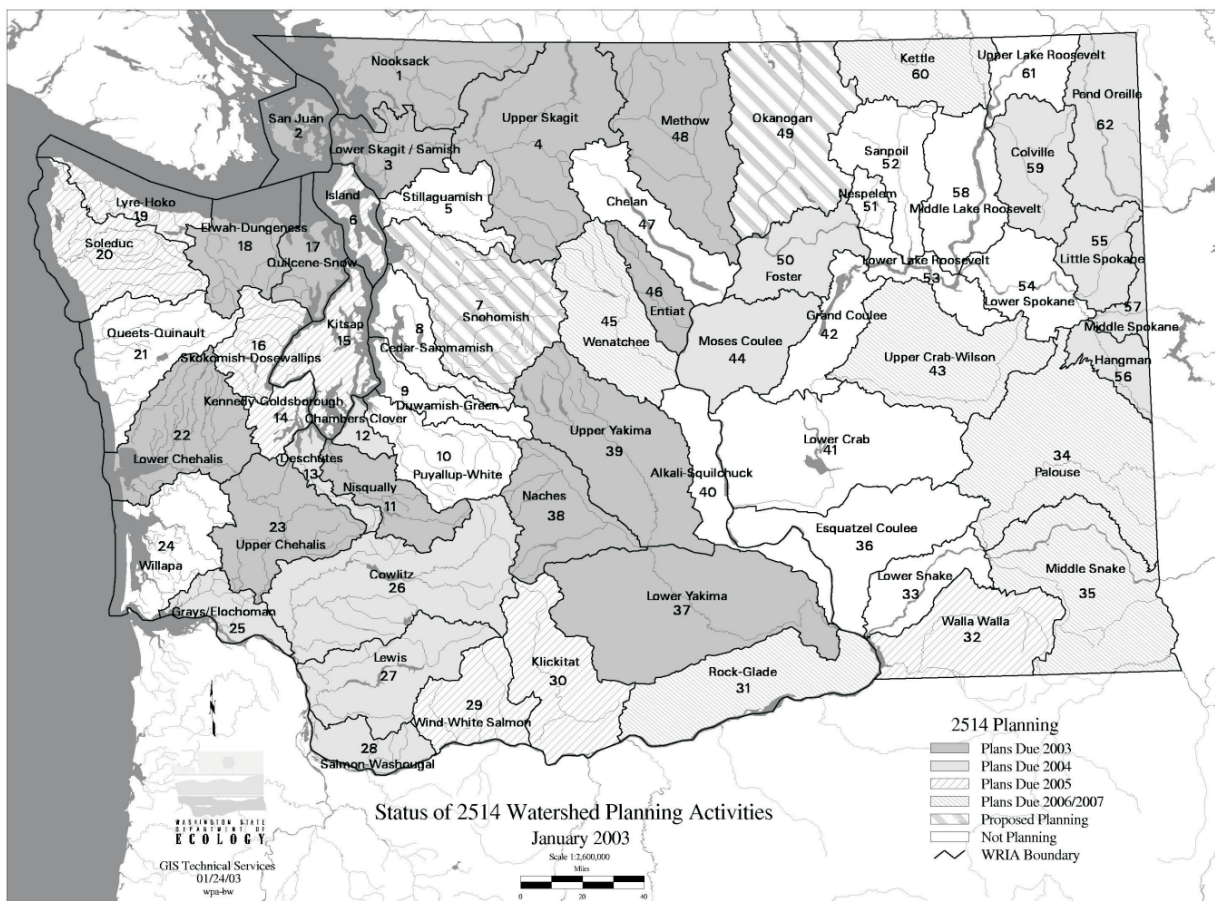
- ❖ Develop detailed implementation plans within one year of management plan adoption.
- ❖ Identify potential funding sources during Phase Three planning, anticipating reviews within the context of water-resource needs in a given WRIA.

- ❖ Include provisions for management decisions, progress reviews and revisions in implementation guidelines.
- ❖ Address the purposes of any data collection, efforts to update key data, coordination of monitoring activities, and provisions for data management.
- ❖ Identify information needed to assess effectiveness of watershed plan activities, and determine when changes are necessary.

### Recommendations to Legislature

- ❖ Allow Planning Units or successor groups to continue after adoption.
- ❖ Establish "Implementing Governments" and "Implementation Lead Agencies" to coordinate the process.
- ❖ Enable local governments to establish WRIA-wide "Water Resource Districts" by citizen vote with taxing authority, locally elected or appointed board members, and authority to administer implementation.
- ❖ Expand "obligations" to include voluntarily acceptance by any government, and "rule-making" to include policies, procedures and interlocal agreements.

- ❖ Authorize grants of \$100,000/year per WRIA (and \$25,000 per additional WRIA in a Planning Unit) for three years following plan adoption, and a possible two-year extension of \$50,000/year, with all funds subject to a 10-25% match.
- ❖ Review how state fund managers and key federal programs can support implementation.
- ❖ Consider new state-level funding for water-related infrastructure and watershed management programs.
- ❖ Provide for periodic review and amendment of adopted plans by Planning Units or successor groups at the discretion of Implementing Governments through a process involving county legislative authorities.
- ❖ Direct state-wide monitoring and information systems to address a broader range of water resource information needs.
- ❖ Improve information coordination among State agencies, enhance smaller-scale monitoring capabilities, and provide better data access for watershed managers and the public.
- ❖ Fund watershed information improvements where data limitations preclude effective management.



# Watershed Management Plans: Scope, Date Dues & Awards (July 1998 - December 2002)

Water Resource Inventory Areas (grouped by Planning Unit)	Current Phase <sup>1</sup>	Planning Scope				Flows by Ecology <sup>3</sup>	Critical Flows <sup>4</sup>	Existing Flows <sup>5</sup>	Final Plan Due Date	Grants Awarded
		Quality	Habitat	Storage	Flows <sup>2</sup>					
#1 Nooksack	3	X	X		X		X	X	4th Qtr 03	\$600,000
#2 San Juan	3	X	X		X				4th Qtr 03	\$441,719
#3 Lower Skagit/Samish	3				X			X	4th Qtr 03	\$1,075,000
#4 Upper Skagit					X			X		
#6 Island	3					X			2nd Qtr 05	\$419,345
#7 Snohomish <sup>6</sup>							X	X		
#11 Nisqually	3	X	X		X			X	4th Qtr 03	\$400,875
#12 Chambers/Clover	3	X	X			X	X	X	4th Qtr 04	\$500,000
#13 Deschutes	3	X	X		X			X	4th Qtr 04	\$525,000
#14 Kennedy/Goldsborough	3	X	X		X			X	4th Qtr 05	\$312,756
#15 Kitsap	3	X	X	X	X				2nd Qtr 05	\$506,133
#16 Skokomish/Dosewallips	3	X	X		X				4th Qtr 05	\$318,081
#17 Quilcene/Snow	3	X	X		X		X		4th Qtr 03	\$525,300
#18 Elwha/Dungeness	3	X	X	X	X		X		4th Qtr 03	\$800,000
#19 Lyre/Hoko	2	X	X		X				3rd Qtr 05	\$334,233
#20 Soleduck/Hoh		X	X		X					
#22 Lower Chehalis <sup>7</sup>	3	X	X	X	X			X	4th Qtr 03	\$1,438,351
#23 Upper Chehalis		X	X	X	X			X		
#25 Grays/Elochoman	3	X	X		X				3rd Qtr 04	\$1,020,420
#26 Cowlitz		X	X		X					
#27 Lewis	3	X	X		X				3rd Qtr 04	\$1,021,810
#28 Salmon/Washougal		X	X		X					
#29 Wind/White Salmon	2	X	X			X			2nd Qtr 05	\$250,000
#30 Klickitat	3	X	X			X			2nd Qtr 05	\$500,000
#31 Rock/Glade	1	Not yet determined				X			Not yet set	\$50,000
#32 Walla Walla	3	X	X	X	X		X	X	3rd Qtr 05	\$512,362
#34 Palouse	1	Not yet determined							Not yet set	\$50,000
#35 Middle Snake	1	Not yet determined					X		Not yet set	\$50,000
#37 Lower Yakima <sup>8</sup>	3	X	X	X			X	<sup>10</sup>	Completed 4th Qtr 02	\$1,810,000
#38 Naches		X	X	X			X	<sup>10</sup>		
#39 Upper Yakima		X	X	X			X	<sup>10</sup>		
#43 Upper Crab/Wilson	2	X	X		X				3rd Qtr 06	\$141,462
#44 Moses Coulee	3	X	X		X				3rd Qtr 04	\$602,981
#50 Foster		X	X		X					
#45 Wenatchee	2	X	X		X		X	X	2nd Qtr 06	\$235,333
#46 Entiat	3	X	X		X				4th Qtr 03	\$339,102
#48 Methow <sup>9</sup>	2	X	X			X	X	X <sup>10</sup>	4th Qtr 03	\$749,999
#49 Okanogan <sup>6</sup>							X	X		
#55 Little Spokane	3	X	X		X			X	1st Qtr 04	\$879,265
#57 Middle Spokane		X	X		X					
#56 Hangman	3	X	X		X				4th Qtr 04	\$353,500
#59 Colville	3	X		X		X		X	4th Qtr 04	\$600,000
#60 Kettle	2				X				2nd Qtr 06	\$172,500
#62 Pend Oreille	3	X	X			X			3rd Qtr 04	\$497,706
TOTAL										\$18,033,233

1) Most advanced phase for which funding has been awarded.

2) WRIAs where initiating governments have agreed to assume responsibility for coordinating instream flow-setting.

3) Initiating governments in these WRIAs have opted to let Ecology coordinate instream flow-setting.

4) WRIAs where critically low flows limit fish survival. Not shown: Cedar/Sammamish (#8), Duwamish/Green (#9) and Puyallup/White (#10).

5) Flows in these WRIAs are codified under WAC 173. Initiating governments can proposing amendments. Flows for portions of Eastern Washington WRIAs bordering the mainstem of the Columbia and Snake rivers are further affected by WAC 173 chapters 531A, 563 and 564. Not shown: Cedar/Sammamish (#8), Duwamish/Green (#9) and Puyallup/White (#10).

6) Initiating governments in these WRIAs have expressed interest in watershed planning but have yet to commit to the process.

7) The Chehalis Planning Unit was awarded \$453,956 in FY 99. They subsequently changed lead agencies and returned \$373,008 to the state general fund via Ecology. As the new lead agency, Grays Harbor County was awarded Phase Two and Three planning funds in FY 00.

8) The Yakima Planning Unit received a special \$85,000 budget proviso in 2000. Funding was provided with watershed planning grant dollars.

9) The Methow Planning Unit received a special \$500,000 budget proviso in 2000. Funding was provided with watershed planning grant dollars.

10) WRIAs with federal "target flow" regulations administered by the Bureau of Reclamation.